1:Murphy and Quain E-4,5 (1938) 1955
SP23 Trumai SP23

Divorce and Adultery

The polygynous unions were extremely brittle. In two cases observed by Quain, they lasted only a few days. In both instances the first wife was responsible for the break-up. The bonds of the second marriage of a plural mating were loose, for Jakwanari's second wife had sexual relations with several Trumaí men with apparent impunity. Such behavior would have been dealt with severely by a husband had his first wife been involved. Divorces also occurred in monogamous marriages; they entailed little more than telling the wife to leave. After the birth of their son, Oirupa sent his Mehinaku wife back to her village and kept the child. The right of the father's village over the children seems to have been general in the area, for Autu had a son by a Waurá husband, whom the Waurá refused to give to the Trumaí.

There is no recorded instance of adultery precipitating a divorce, although this probably occurred. However, the usual procedure was for the injured husband to beat his wife and make a lengthy and heated speech against the offending suitor. The wife of an adulterous husband showed anger toward his paramour and did not speak to her. Hair pulling resulted in some cases. The husband's behavior was viewed as reprehensible by the wife, but she took no action against him. One wife even chuckled a bit over her husband's adventures, although jealousy is the more usual response.

Due to the threat of punishment, the married women engaged far less in extra-marital relations than did their husbands. Both married and unmarried men sought out unattached women, but instances of married men in such liaisons were less numerous. The younger married men and Maibu, the chief, seemed to have been the chief offenders. The latter complained to Quain that all the women in the village were prohibited to him, as they were his wife's cross-cousins. Neither his genealogy nor his activities bore him out, and he often approached the single women and Jakwanari's second wife when the other men were out of the village. Everyone conceded that, although Maibu's wife had not reached menopause, she was "too old." Thus they rationalized his escapades.

The instability of the nuclear family and the vicissitudes to which it was exposed were alleviated by household and kin distribution and by the interdependence of co-resident relatives of the opposite sex for sexually specialized goods and services. These arrangements made possible the economic workability of Trumaí culture. The conjugal family was basic to the culture, however, and marriage was highly desirable to the Trumaí. Despite the shortage of available women and the conflicts which stemmed from it, sex relations between unmarried persons were free and easy and subject to little or no public censure, except insofar as they encroached on the interests of others. Incest

1:Murphy and Quain E-4,5 (1938) 1955
SP23 Trumai SP23

compartment in the house for six months, at the end of which time she is accepted as a young woman.[3]

Menstruation caused no special distress to the Trumaí women. They maintained personal cleanliness with the aid of leaves, going out into the brush behind the house to care for themselves. Although the relevant taboos were observed, the women talked frankly to Quain about menstruation, and were interested in learning what white women did during the period. The men, although expressing a fear of menstrual blood, did not shun the subject either. Most of them knew when women in the village were having their menses.

Everyone was extremely shocked when Quain told them that white people often had intercourse during the menstrual period, for such contact would make a Trumaí man fall ill and die. Aloarí said that he would surely die of a cough if he copulated with his wife then. The blood itself was considered malignant, infecting whatever it touched. The whole village became very disturbed when Kuyafi dropped some menstrual blood on the path to the gardens. Aloarí averred that he would not go for manioc until the rain washed it away.

Fear of polluting forced a menstruating woman to make frequent trips to the weeds, where nobody walked. The danger also extended to her person. During this time she was not allowed to cook, although she could sit around the fire when food was being prepared. (Quain's departure from the Trumaí village was delayed for a day as both the wife and sister-in-law of Aloarí, who was to accompany him, were menstruating, and there was only one woman left in the household to make his *beijú* supply.) Nor could the menstruating woman carry water or take a bath. However, a prohibition on eating fish was the only food taboo that she had to observe.

Marriage

A man was ready to seek a mate within one or two years after his initiation, or at the corresponding age level. Women were suitable prospects soon after their puberty rites. It was common for marriages to be arranged by parents while their children were still infants. These infant betrothals were usually between cross-cousins. It is doubtful, however, whether many such arranged marriages were consummated, both because of the high mortality and the fact that most of the Trumaí women were ultimately fought for and won by verbal battles in the men's circle.

Courtships were neither long nor formalized. When a man developed an interest in a woman, he usually expressed it by attempting to seduce her. In most instances, amorous advances were made without any in-

[3] Rodrigues Ferreira 1946, p. 92.

1:Murphy and Quain E-4,5 (1938) 1955
SP23 Trumai SP23

tention of marriage. But an intention of marriage did not insure exclusive sexual rights. The man usually continued to get gratification wherever he could find it. The knowledge of his other liaisons did not particularly disturb his bride-to-be, as she herself may well have been receiving attentions from other lovers. After marriage, such transgressions were not so readily tolerated.

The chief obstacles in the way of the marriage-bent Trumaí swain were the necessity to shout down his rivals and gain the approval and consent of the girl's kinsmen. The woman's consent was not necessary in making the marriage, and she usually remained aloof, waiting to see who won. If, however, she was not pleased with the mate to whom she was awarded, she was free to leave him. And this she often did. While Quain was in the village, there were marriages that lasted only a day or two due to the bride's dissatisfaction.

In addition to the arguments that precede most marriages, the man was expected to go through certain formalities. He went to the girl's mother and stated his intentions. If the girl had no mother, he approached the nearest male relative. In order to gain the favor of her kinsmen, he distributed gifts, the most important to the girl's mother, others to her father, siblings, and her mother's brother. The gift to the latter was especially important, as he was the one who formally gave the woman, or as the Trumaí phrase it, "spreads her legs." Gifts were also given the girl, culminating with a present of fish. In the meantime the girl made an especially fine hammock which she gave to the groom.

If everything was accepted, the man was free to take the girl to his house. The wedding was preceded by a fishing expedition in which nearly all the men participated, and by a wrestling match for which the groom was beautifully painted. The women held a trade game. The actual ceremony consisted of nothing more than the woman's moving into the house of her mate. A male relative carried her hammock to his home.

This was the way weddings should have been conducted in the Trumaí village. Actually, they were even less formal, especially in the case of second wives in polygamous unions. Marriage and sex preoccupied the Trumaí, for there were not enough women to go around; but even the few formal acts involved interested the Trumaí little. If the marriage was durable, the couple settled down and had children. After marriage and the birth of children no great change occurred in their positions in the community until they reached old age.

Old Age

Everyone in the village was classified as "younger" or "older." The men were either *axosek* (younger) or *tdakek* (older), while the terms for the women were, respectively, *axosekisa* and *tdakits*. These were not age